

RUTLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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VERMONT WAR CONVENTION 1917



The Shrine Theater on Wales Street, site of the state-wide World War I Rally held in Rutland on 27-28 September 1917.

The Vermont War Convention in 1917 provides an insight into the war effort at a grass roots level. Nearly three quarters of a century ago Rutland hosted the state conference in the Shrine Theater on Wales Street. Delegates from ten Rutland County towns pledged attendance. The theater was filled to seating capacity, with an additional 200 people standing. The **Rutland Herald** reported that over 3,000 Vermonters were attracted to the events. Subsequent satellite conventions were held in several locations throughout the state.

President Woodrow Wilson had established six great wartime agencies to aid in the war effort, among them the Food Administration, headed by Herbert Hoover. The program heightened awareness that people in the war-torn countries were starving. U.S. food conservation was encouraged by various means, including "meatless" and "wheatless" days and the development of the "clean plate" concept. Alexander Thompson, a representative of the federal administration spoke at the first session in Rutland. Congressman Julius Kahn of California spoke to the Rutland High School students at a school assembly.

The article that follows is from a 1925 issue of the old VERMONT magazine. It is a report of the Thursday and Friday War Rally held in Rutland on 27-28 September 1917.

—The Editor



CHARLES RUSSELL CUMMINGS

Born: Newport, Vermont
24 December 1870

Died: Hartford, Vermont
25 November 1945

Charles Cummings was the author of the article reprinted in this issue of the Rutland Historical Society *Quarterly*. Mr. Cummings was the owner of THE VERMONT magazine from December 1905 until 1945. He bought the magazine from Colonel Charles S. Forbes and merged it with his own popular eight page advertising sheet called THE INTER-STATE JOURNAL. The journal was largely patronized by merchants and businessmen in surrounding Vermont and New Hampshire towns. It was a monthly that had sold for fifty-cents a year!

Cummings learned his trade from his father at an early age. A perfectionist, he was actually the publisher, the editor,

typesetter, printer's devil, photographer, writer and artist. His wife, Minnie Dean Cummings, was trained to the craft and was an active and potent influence in what proved to be their life work. The monthly magazine was advertised as the state magazine. It had wide distribution at the subscription price of one dollar a year. THE VERMONT was never a great money-maker, partly due to his underwriting the expense of publishing books in which he had an interest in the subject matter. He had to take much of his pay in satisfaction of a good job well done.

Cummings was ill with heart trouble only a short time before he died at the age of 75. His likely successor to the business was still serving in the army during WWII. Unavailable, publication of the magazine ceased, to be succeeded in 1946 with the state-supported VERMONT LIFE magazine.

The Vermont War Conventions

BY CHARLES B. CUMMINGS

The war conference at Rutland Sept. 27 and 28 was a great meeting to strengthen Vermont's resolve. It combined the best efforts of the Greater Vermont Association (heading the boards of trade), the Vermont Committee of Public Safety and the National Security League.

Great speakers were present, such as Vermont never heard before, authorized representatives of the allies and of our government, publicists and university professors. The world situation, in its latest phase, was clearly laid before us. The meeting furnished the enthusiasm for a series of meetings on war subjects in nine other counties, by other notable speakers, in October, and which was extended further by local volunteer speakers at every village and hamlet—culminating with a drive for observance of food conservation in which Vermont went literally over the top, with 3,261 signed pledge cards better than the expected 60,000.

The initial war conference was held in the Shrine Theater at Rutland. A great audience was present at each of the principal sessions, thrilled with the messages offered and responding spontaneously, topping climaxes by rising with hearty acclaim—a thing which occurred 19 times.

The stage was completely filled, after Vermont's manner of doing things, with our prominent men. It was jocosely said by Mr. James Hartness before the meeting that they "had reserved the stage for future governors but it was not big enough." The stage was beautifully decorated with international colors and with the Vermont state seal. The ushers were home guards in uniform.

It is unnecessary to follow the proceedings closely here. President F. H. Babbitt of the Greater Vermont Association was the usual tactful presiding officer. Mayor Brislin extended welcome. Governor Graham concisely stated the purpose of the meeting, Dr. Royokichi Iyenaga, Alexander Thompson, representative of Herbert Hoover, and James M. Beck of New York City spoke at the first meeting, Thursday afternoon.

In the evening Governor Graham presided and aptly introduced each speaker: General Emilie Guglielmatti, representative of Italy, Julius Kahn, Congressman from California, Dr. Iyenaga, Edouard de Billy, from France, and George Adam, representing Great Britain. It is with the addresses of these gentlemen that we are chiefly concerned, for their bearing on international questions. Dr. Iyenaga's addresses, one supplementary to the other, are here recorded in sequence.

Where Japan Stands

The address of Dr. Toyokichi Iyenaga was awaited with interest. He was a short, brown man who announced himself "a plain citizen." The statements which he launched with a good command of English and his evident unwillingness to depart far from the tenor of a manuscript to which he frequently referred, marked him to most listeners, an authorized spokesman for the Japanese embassy. He spoke rather loudly and with a broad, blatant intonation. He exhibited a consciousness of power, of reserve and dignity. The impression gained from what he *didn't* say was that the time might come when Japan would have to be recognized, with concessions, as a decisive factor in the war.

Dr. Iyenaga (it takes Mason Stone to pronounce it), is, it seems, a lecturer on political science at the University of Chicago and director of the east and west news bureau, New York. He said in part:

Japan entered the war in obedience to the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance which imposed upon her the duty of conducting military operations in common with her ally (Great Britain) in eastern Asia and of safeguarding mutual interests there. Japan entered into the agreement between the allied powers to make no separate peace,

but since the capture of the German stronghold in the Far East, Nov. 7, 1914, and the sweeping of enemy warships out of eastern seas, Japan has apparently been standing aloof from the conflict. While blood and treasure are expended on European battlefields Japan keeps her youth intact—a belligerent that has also made money out of the war.

The war has brought Japan a prosperity never known before. Her foreign trade has reached the billion mark. Her mills, shipyards and factories are busy day and night and are reaping enormous profits. Japan, though shouldering a great debt, is now lending some money to the Entente powers.

These benefits have come to Japan, a belligerent, by reason of her peculiar geographical position, the same as to the United States while the greatest neutral.

America has received material benefit on a vastly greater scale.

Japan's aid to the allies has consisted of the dispatch of a division of her army and the reduction of Tsingtec, in conjunction with British troops on Nov. 7, 1914, the dispatch of the first and second Japanese fleets and other squadrons to blockade the harbor of Kiaochow, to hunt enemy warships roving the adjoining seas, to capture their bases in the South Sea and to convoy the troops of Australia and New Zealand to Europe, entailing cruises of enormous length, a campaign of course as but child's play compared with the colossal battles fought in Europe and the arduous tasks of the allied fleets.

Japan's part has been done thoroughly and I may be pardoned when I say with a minimum of effort for a maximum of effect, the results secured being so far among the few aims of the allies that have been completely realized.

Dr. Iyenaga then pictured the conditions which would have existed but for Japan's aid: the insecurity of communication and commerce between Europe and the Far East, the withdrawal of part of the allied fleets to safeguard the road from Aden to Shanghai, the disturbance of tranquility in China, and of British interests in her Asiatic dominions. Japan is preserving peace in almost half the globe.

I can not let pass unchallenged the charge now and then made that Japan is indifferent to the cause of her allies because she is not fighting on European battlefields. It was neither the wish of her allies nor of Japan that she would thrust herself upon the European state, for it is none of her part to act therein. This is the strongest reason why she has not sent her troops to the European front to take an active part in the conflict. In the meantime she has done to her best ability that which is within her province to do. She has kept watch from the Yellow Sea to the Red and a large part of the Pacific. She has sent a fleet of destroyers to the Mediterranean, which was not in the agreement. She has subscribed to the loans of her allies to the full extent of her financial capacity. She has supplied munitions and supplies to the allies, and in quantities to Russia, piled high on the wharves of Vladivostock, owing to limited transportation overland.

While it is none of Japan's business to intrude herself upon the European battlefield, there are almost insurmountable difficulties in the way. The only alternative to the overtaxed Siberian railway would be to transport troops by sea. But where could we secure the required ships? In transporting a million soldiers probably four millions of tonnage would be required, in other words 1,000 ocean-going ships of 4,000 tons each, and a constant flow of military provisions must also be provided for. Japan has only about 70 ships of over 5,000 tonnage in her merchant marine fit for ocean voyage at present, which could be used for this purpose. Not only would much time be expended before the transportation program could be completed but meantime the commerce of the Far East with America and Europe would be completely paralyzed. Moreover it would be of far greater benefit to her allies, that Japan should, if she could dispense with it, divert some part of her shipping to the Atlantic for carrying foodstuffs and other necessities, rather than utilize the ships for transporting Japanese troops.

Japan stands ready to do everything in her power for successful prosecution of the war against a common foe. The nation that puts honor and loyalty first will never

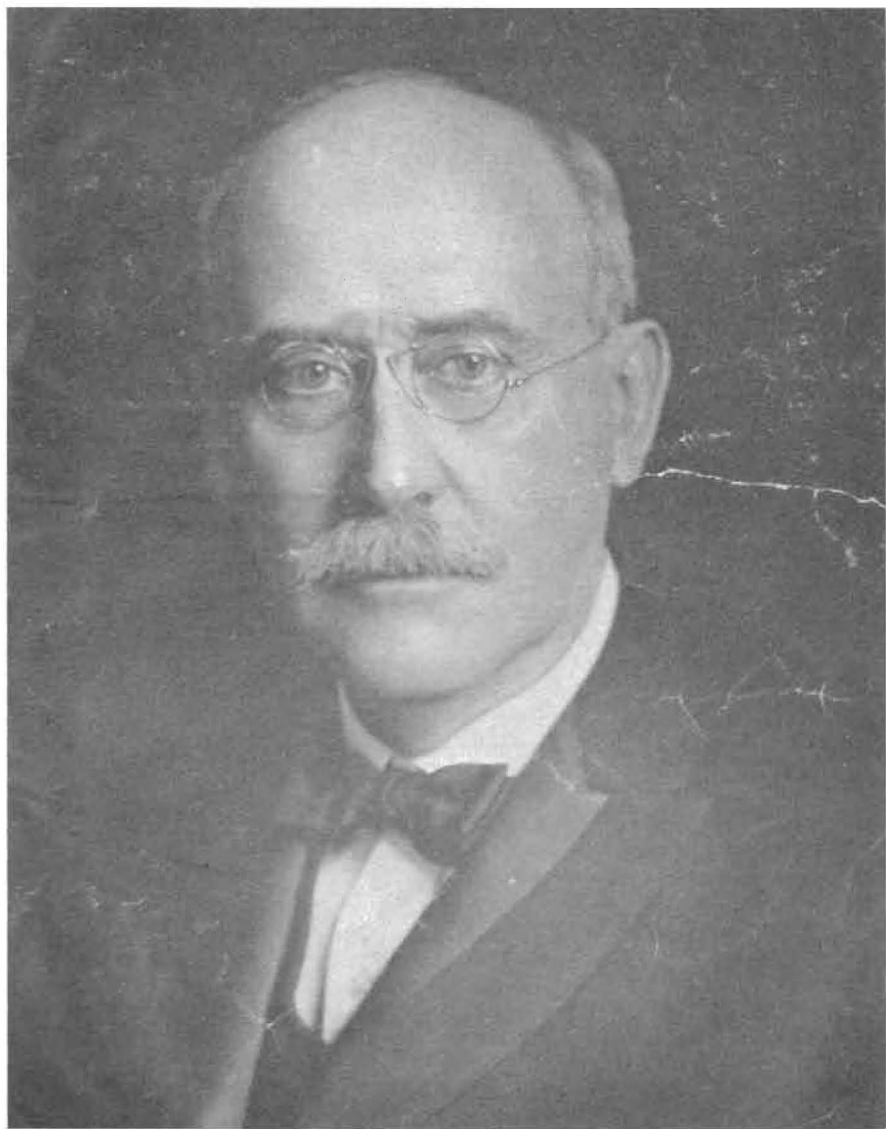


*Mayor Henry C. Brislin (1913-1914; 1917-1918)
extended a welcome as the conference convened.*

turn traitor to her allies or attempt to stab in the back another nation with which it is on the friendliest terms. (great applause and rising—cheers and applause! awoke his audience to a lively interest, finally, during the applause, Governor Graham arose and shook hands with the speaker.)

Quite contrary to Germany's expectation Japan hails with joy the entrance of the United States into the world struggle. For, in addition to the tremendous resources of the United States, which are bound to turn the scale of war on the side of the Entente Powers, there are special reasons for Japan in welcoming America. Both are similarly situated in regard to geographical position they occupy, the duties and functions they should occupy towards the allies, and the interests and aims they want to safeguard and realize. These considerations would naturally make America and Japan the closest of allies, both in war and at the peace conference of the future. Both are separated from Europe by a wide expanse of waters. Neither America nor Japan should, therefore, be interested in the remaking of the map of Europe. They are fighting but for their welfare. If the allied nations of Europe are brought to their knees by Prussianism, America and Japan would ultimately have to face it on their side of the waters. Both America and Japan are opposed to the conclusion of peace at the present moment, for such a peace would signify the triumph of Germany. They entertain no delusions as to the aims of Germany in tendering peace proposals. With Serbia crushed, Montenegro overrun, Rumania conquered, Turkey and Bulgaria the vassals of Germany, and Austria-Hungary bound hand and foot to her heels, the program Germany had formulated when she set Europe aflame, is measureably completed. The formula "Hamburg to Bagdad" is fairly on the way to realization. Were peace concluded on this basis, Germany would hold in her palm all southwestern Europe and she could easily, at the first opportunity, embark upon the next step of dominating Asia. She would be in an excellent position to strike Egypt, break the barrier between Turkey and Persia and lead her legions to the valleys of the Indus. After that, sooner or later, would come the turn of Japan to receive punishment for her audacity in unsheathing the sword against the greatest military power of Europe in 1914. Then we would see, in a more terrible form than before, the resurrection of the "mailed fist" policy in China, which once gave Kiaochow and its hinterland to the Kaiser. Nothing then, it seems to me, could prevent a hegemony of the world, secure in the grasp of Germany. Could the United States, the wealthiest of nations, escape from inviting the cupidity of the present day Napoleon for despoilation or from being challenged as to the efficacy of the Monroe doctrine? America and Japan are fighting to prevent these untold catastrophies coming upon them.

We are fighting to make the reign of democracy safe in the world. We want the principles of humanity carried out in war and peace. Much ink has been spilt to place Japan in the ranks of autocracy and thus isolate her from her allies or cool their ardor toward her.



Governor Horace F. Graham (1917-1919) concisely presented the goals of the Rutland War Conference and chaired the Thursday evening session.



James Hartness of Springfield (governor in 1921-23) chairman of Vermont's Committee of Public Safety and State Food Administration, presided over the Friday session of the conference.

Democracy, as I construe it to be, is a synonym for republic. It is enthroned in the country where social equality, instead of feudal aristocracy prevails; where one's merits count more than rank or family pedigree; where every individual has the right to the full enjoyment of "life, property and the pursuit of happiness" and is no slave of a dominant caste; where right rules over might and militarism is not the controlling force; in short, where justice, liberty, equality and humanity are made the basic principles of the state. In this sense Japan is as much a democracy as the United States, England, France, Italy and the newly-born democracy of Russia. Japan reveres her sovereign, the Mikado, for he personifies the sanctity of law, order and discipline. Japan has a strong centralized government and an efficient army and navy. Do these elements, however, constitute an autocracy? A thousand times, no. Are they not the essentials of success, especially in time of war, in every democracy?

Let us see that democracy is not mistaken for chaos, anarchy and socialism. We have strong confidence the newly-born democracy of Russia may redeem itself. We want the sanctity of treaties to be scrupulously respected and not treated as scraps of paper at the whim of a German war lord. We want the dictates of the conscience of humanity to be followed. Let us not blame the fellows who are fighting in the German army—the whole trouble is in the German military system.

America and Japan each cherish the same ideals, and it is only befitting for them to join hands and work with all the energy and resources they have at command for the successful conclusion of the tremendous issues they are now facing.

As for Ourselves

James M. Beck of New York, a former assistant attorney-general of the United States and an author of important books on the war, was a polished speaker. He referred to the battle of Bennington as a similar crisis to the present darkest hour of the world. He reviewed the attempts made by the entente nations to prevent the outbreak of war and the determination of Germany and Austria to fight unless the world would meet their every demand. "We must lick the bully," he said. He outlined our pitiful unpreparedness for the war of the Revolution and depicted advance of the present war, creating intense interest. He told of our debt to France, for her assistance in the war of independence 145 years ago, and urged that we respond to her need in fullest measure. Mr. Beck was extremely well posted, a wonderful orator and made a powerfully sympathetic appeal.

With Our Italian Friends

A serenade to the Italian representatives, who had just arrived, took place before one of the hotels, late in the afternoon, General Guglielmatti, in a smoothly fitting uniform, bowing his acknowledgments from an upper piazza. There were many flags in the closely packed street before him, and much talking by the 400 Italians gathered from Rutland and nearby places. Afterward they escorted the distinguished visitors to a small hall given over to the Italian people.

At this meeting Ludivo Ricci of Rutland told why the officers representing the Italian government had come to Rutland, evoking roars of applause and cheers as the audience rose to its feet in deference to the guests of honor.

General Guglielmatti said: "Dear friends and countrymen, I thank you for the applause you have given me and I appreciate it the more because you are not applauding me but the uniform I wear (cheers).

He told of the struggle Italy was making. "Our battle line," he said, "is 500 miles long—a longer line than all of the allies are holding. The soldiers of Italy are suffering much in this awful fight but they are willing to do this to secure the liberty of the future and now that America has joined us we are sure that the end will be victory. "Just think," he said, "we have only a population of 55,000,000 and we have in the field 4,500,000 soldiers.

"Victory is assured. We do not know if it is near or far, but now, when the flag of the Stars and Stripes waves with all the other banners, it means that we will all work together to win victory and liberty."

"The general saluted the Italian flag—"Viva Italia ! Viva la America ! Viva le Allies!" (deafening applause).

Major Vonutelli spoke briefly saying:

"I am very glad to see the Italian colony of Rutland, composed wholly of working men, so united, and I earnestly hope that they will do their best to remain so."

Closing the meeting Giosofatto Romano of Rutland expressed the thanks of the Rutlanders to the general and his companion and to Major Taylor, representing this government. To his own people he said: "I am proud to see you Italians here and to have you learn from these great men how we must all stand together in the United States, our adopted land, to help win its fight, which is that of our own fatherland."

Italy's Message

General Emilie Guglielmatti, representing Italy, was greeted with great applause at the Shrine theater. He expressed himself with difficulty and said in part:

"I always like to try to say a few words. I think it my duty to try to speak English. Italy is fighting a common enemy. Out of a population of 55,000,000 inhabitants Italy has four millions in the army. Italy felt more sure of victory going into the war because we know *America* is right."

Captain Vannutelli, a short, sailor-looking naval attache of the Italian legation at Washington barely made himself understood. He referred to the struggle of the Italian army on high, rocky ground, to the sinking and recovery of a German submarine in Italian waters and said that Italy depended much on the United States for supplies. In conclusion he said: "I have been all over the world and never saw such politeness as here—the best for the last! I feel sure in peace we be very near," sentiments that were warmly applauded.

A Message of Love from France

Mons Edouard de Billy, the representative of France, is their deputy high commissioner. He was a finished gentleman who rose at the strains of the "Marseillaise" and who spoke fluently, though with slight hesitance in delivery, and with a sincerity tinged with sorrow. He fingered the edges of his coat and seemed vibrant with emotion.

"Our welcome is everywhere the same," he said, in part. "America draws a new stream of love from our hearts. You are a great people, glad to give back a hundred fold what you have received." He explained the Monroe doctrine and spoke of the activity of German agents seeking to involve us with other countries. "Restriction to travel on the high seas was an insult and notice of more extended action by submarines a challenge," was one of his statements. "Germany thinks that the state is above the people. . . . The aims of the allies are those of small states and large nations developing alike in democratic principles and according to tradition. America is the most democratic nation, France has always fought for liberty (storms of applause). "We want no temporary peace (great applause). What is the use of stopping the bloodshed today if it can be begun again tomorrow?"

Great Britain's Representative

Major George Adam, formerly in the British Ministry of Munitions, and an accredited representative of the British war office, was a Scotchman who made many telling hits. He was a small, clerical looking man, whose first utterance was this verbal projectile: "I used to be in a church where my chief job was to keep men out of hell; then I switched to munitions to put the Germans where they belong!"

He flouted the German claim that Britain was in the war because of Germany's commercial and industrial development. Great Britain could have stopped their marine at any time in the last fifty years. Britain had permitted German ships to obtain coal at her coaling stations all over the world and to use English ports without paying duty. Britain was Germany's greatest customer before the war. This did not look like jealousy.

Germany had been able to go far toward success in the war because of possession of Alsace-Lorraine, rich in iron and coal. When peace is made America must insist upon giving Alsace—Lorraine back to France.

The present kaiser has released the whole poisonous life of Germany, according to the dope passed out by Frederick the Great, a poison every German passed through the German machine is immersed in. Germany has committed crimes against hospitality here, in France and in Great Britain. Not a hundredth part of their atrocities has been told. Their cruelty in mutilation is past belief. They are inoculated with the serum of militarism and have no horror. A German professor had made the statement that they were fighting for the Kaiser—"the greatest representative of God on earth—greater than Jesus Christ." In fifty years they have not made one worth-while contribution to the spiritual culture of humanity.

All the world of men will never be able to measure the sacrifice of that hero among nations—France (great demonstration, rising and cheers). He couldn't [sic] used to see how the French *poilu* with baggy trousers, comic opera cap and long bayonet could fight—he seemed funny. But, ye Gods—he used to be gay and frivolous and foolish—but no longer! He paid tender tribute to French widows for their fervent loyalty to France. Italy, fighting high in the Alps, was making supermen. Japan has helped hold the seas. Russia is coming back they hope.

Mr. Adam said he was proud of Great Britain, where even the children are cooperating—the boys and girls (in overalls) carrying messages for the war office. The boy scouts of Great Britain are guarding the coast in place of the coast guards who have been placed on ships. More than 50 per cent of the munition workers are women. They clean the streets, run cars and trucks, are in the commissary, telephone and other departments of the army, and like their sisters in France and Flanders are so near the fighting line that they are almost constantly under shell fire.

There will be no more militant suffragists—the women have earned the right to vote (audience hung on his words). Women are the superiors of men, intellectually, morally and spiritually. They are full of pluck. No man can make the same sacrifice. When the war is over there will be more God in the world.

The war has cost Great Britain forty million dollars a day for the past three years. America's contribution to the allies has at no time reached eight per cent. Britain has a million and a quarter men dead and permanently disabled. Sacrifices will lie on our hearts. America will be enriched and glorified.

Mr. Adam delivered a great message, of which only the framework—the more significant statements—are recorded here. The audience frequently subscribed to his sentiments.

On Friday morning a large audience listened attentively to some of the best treats of the occasion: to Prof. Albert Bushnell Hart of Harvard University, Prof. Robert M. McElroy of the University of Pennsylvania, Alexander Thompson, representing the National Food Administration and Henry L. West of the National Security League. This morning conference was aimed especially at the education of local speakers and was presided over by Mr. James Hartness, chairman of Vermont's Committee of Public Safety and State Food Administrator.

A conference of Vermont patriotic speakers and of chairmen of committees of the projected food card pledge campaign, held at 2 p.m. was addressed by vigorous speakers and justified the fact that some of the best things come out at what are supposed to be unimportant, because last, sessions.

From the first it was a momentous gathering, giving those who attended from all parts of the state authoritative insight on the situation.

Following the state meeting at Rutland a series of war meetings of unprecedented size and enthusiasm was held in county after county. These were addressed by Prof. William B. Guthrie, professor of law in the College of the City of New York, by Newton W. Gilbert, ex-governor general of the Philippine Islands, Joseph E. O'Toole, assistant secretary of the United States Senate, and Char(liss) Bigelow of New Haven, the Simeon Ford of the occasion. Mr. Adam also addressed some of the earlier meetings. At Middlebury the house was packed, at Morrisville, as at St. Albans, it was found necessary to hold two meetings at the same time. At Randolph it was said that the meeting outclassed any ever held before. And so Vermont rose to the occasion.

The immediate results of these inspiring meetings were shown in the large contributions to the Liberty Loan, and in the fact that Vermont was the first to report her goal achieved in the family food pledge card campaign.

A musical and military touch was given to the occasions by the presence of local bands and orchestras. At the state war convention at Rutland as each speaker representing one of the great allies arose, the national air of his nation was played. At Bennington and St. Johnsbury and Springfield, the music of bands helped bring expectancy to a high pitch. At Burlington the band of the 19th Regiment gave a military air to proceedings. At St. Albans four bands appeared in a great illuminated parade with floats and torches, amid great enthusiasm from 8,000 people assembled.

In almost every place elaborate decorations of the flags of America and the allies gave a touch of glorious color. Even where music and color were not present the occasion found people responsive. That they went home primed to *do* things the results showed.

The method of handling the whole proposition, through a state war convention by the Greater Vermont Association and Committee of Safety, followed by county conventions directed by the local chairman of the food pledge card campaign, his organization and local boards of trade co-operating, with further presentation in every village and at crossroads schoolhouses by willing workers, is now called the Vermont System by the National Security League, which has been active in spreading it to other states.



** So successful was the rally held in Rutland that the National Security League adopted it as a model and actively spread its organizational pattern to other states. Rutland businessmen received special compliments for their successful efforts.*

CREDITS

Photograph of Shrine Theater: Rutland Historical Society

Photographs of Gov. Graham, James Hartness, Charles Cummings: Rutland Free Library

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Membership in the Society is open to all upon payment of appropriate dues. (See dues schedule below.) With membership, for its period, go a subscription to the Quarterly, any newsletters, a copy of the Annual Report, entitlement to vote at business meetings, and benefits accruing from support of the Society's Museums, exhibits, programs, collections and library. The year through which membership is paid and the category are noted on all address labels.

Please send any address change on Postal Service Form 3576 (a postcard freely available at your local post office).

Annual Meeting is held at 7:30 p.m. on the third Wednesday of October.

Annual dues categories are: Sustaining \$100 or more	Contributing	\$15
Sponsor \$25	Regular	\$ 5
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Advance payment for 2 or 3 years is welcome, helping to reduce costs.

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